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Wen-hui Pao.

DISCUSSES MANIFESTO ISSUED BY CHINESE PROTESTANTS

The following editorial was reprinted from the Peiping Jen-min Pao.

The manifesto entitled "The Path of Effort of the Chinese Protestant Church in the Building of a New China," initially signed by more than 1,500 Chinese Protestant Christians, calls upon all Chinese Protestant Christians to sever the ties between the church and imperialist nations and to practice self-government, self-support, and self-propagation, to attain the goal of a renovated Chinese Christian Church.

This manifesto sets forth the political viewpoint which Christians in the new China should have: namely, anti-imperialism, antifeudalism, antibureaucratic capitalism, antiwar, and in favor of peace. As stated in the accompanying letter appealing for signatures, "This manifesto is a document of the Chinese Christian Church which has historical significance." We believe that the people of the entire nation, like the vast majority of patriotic Chinese Christians, whould extend a warm welcome to this manifesto.

Activities of the Protestant and Catholic churches in China have two aspects. On the one hand, these two churches in China have many virtuous members. They are at the same time both church members and patriotic citizens; they hope for the nation to be independent and strong, and also free and democratic. Hence, they support the political and social reforms initiated by the People's government.

On the other hand, for historical reasons, these two religions have given rise to various dissimilar relations with foreign imperialism. Everyone knows that these two religions have been propagated in China by foreign countries on a large scale for only about 100 years. Many of the missionaries were sent by their governments, following the opium traders and gunboats, as intelligence agents and forerunners of aggression. They have continually extended their influence, relying on imperialist agressive wars and unequal treaties. Many missionaries linked up with Chinese feudal landlords, officials, compradores, for subtle advantage or forcible seizure, deceiving and oppressing good people, many times arousing fierce resentment and resistance on the part of the Chinese, and leaving blood-stained incidents on our history. Church people, together with Chiang and the Americans, have furnished instances of being against Communism and against the people.

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In the war with Japan, there were many cases of Catholic priests doing intelligence work in north Shensi, south Shansi, and northwest Honan. Recently, there have been exposed spy incidents, such as those in the liberation war in Hsing-t'ai, Ch'i-ch'i-ha-erh, Nan Hsien, and Mukden. Because of these incidents, intelligent persons in religious circles have been disturbed, and the present vigorous reform movement has sprung up. The religious policies of the Chinese Communist Party and of 'he Chinese People's government are consistent and clear. Article 5 of the Common Program of the CPPCC provides that the people have freedom of religious belief and, by the same token, freedom to refuse religion. These two aspects of freedom receive the same protection of the law. Religious freedom should be absolutely divorced from foreign aggression and counterrevolutionary activity. Hamful actions will be restrained by the people's government. In restraining these harmful actions, the People's government will not interfere in religious liberty; nor will it allow such harmful actions while protecting religious liberty.

In regard to the question of pure religious faith, any idea of coercive action is both useless and harmful; so we intend to protect freedom of religious faith, just as we protect freedom of refusing religious faith. However, if the churches are used as tools of imperialism for aggression on China and of counterrevolutionaries to oppose the People's governments, they are acting contrary to the people's welfare, and contrary to the original purpose of all genuine believers. Those special agents who use religion to cloak subversive activities (not ordinary innocent church members), whatever religion they profess, whether they are Chinese or foreigners, should all receive proper punishment according to Article 7 of the Common Program.

Starting from this viewpoint, we welcome the self-government, self-support, self-propagation movement begun by Chinese Christians. This is a patriotic movement which Christians should follow to enable the Chinese church to get away from imperialist influence and travel along religion's proper path. The success of the appeal of break away from imperialism and institute a renevation of its own strength, so that the church can change from being an agency of foreigners and become Chinese, will give the Chinese church new life, and will alter the Chinese people's view of the Christian church. Thus a clear demarcation will be drawn between its own activities and those of imperialism making aggression upon China. Therefore, we believe that the manifesto of more than 1,500 Christians, will not only be supported by patriotic Protestants, but also be echoed by patriotic Catholics. All religious believers can get proper direction from this action. Let them advance in that direction, for only in this way can the religious world build up its normal religious affairs.

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